Path Breaking: Constructing Gendered Nationalism in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone

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Constructing a theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics is contemporary China’s Marxism.—Deng Xiaoping

Shenzhen’s past fifteen years of high-speed economic and social development prove that by following Deng Xiaoping’s guiding principle of constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics, socialist production can be greatly liberated and developed.—Li Youwei, former Shenzhen Communist Party secretary

Rural-Urban Relations in Shenzhen

Since its founding, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ) has been represented both domestically and internationally as evidence of the (potential) success of the policies of reform and opening in integrating the People’s Republic of China (PRC) into the world capitalist system.¹ These representations vary: Shenzhen sometimes is portrayed as a means for rectifying the sins of a Maoist past and a sign of the necessity for extending reform to the...
rest of China; recently, it has been portrayed as a token of China’s commitment to capitalist globalization. Practically, these various representations have legitimated the hegemony of the Dengist Communist Party and encouraged foreign direct investment (primarily from Hong Kong and Taiwan) in the PRC. Despite the changing representations of the Shenzhen SEZ, however, each version of “Shenzhen” has been vexed by material contradictions—within Shenzhen itself, between Shenzhen and the rest of China, and between China and the outside world. Specifically, practices associated with Shenzhen legal residence (hukou) created fundamental distinctions between Shenzheners and rural workers, distinctions that predicated a Chinese “competitive advantage” in the world capitalist system. Consequently, the material interests of Shenzheners overlapped with those of the Chinese state and global capital in ways that facilitated an alliance between the state apparatus and international capital. In contrast, the experience of temporary residents, especially rural workers, reminds us of Aijaz Ahmad’s formulation that “[t]he structural inability of capitalism to provide for the vast majority of the populations which it has sucked into its own dominion constitutes the basic, incurable flaw in the system as a whole.” By opposing state representations of immigration to Shenzhen with the institutional process for obtaining Shenzhen legal residence, this essay maps the geotectonic inequality—the institutionalization of the rural-urban division of labor—on which the integration of the PRC into the world capitalist system has been constructed.

Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the PRC experimented with various forms of industrial urbanization, all of which had as a goal the country’s modernization. For the purposes of this essay, I read modernization selectively, emphasizing two of its many meanings. The first involves increased productivity and an improved standard of living for citizens. The second is the gradual integration of the PRC into the global economy. The actualization of these two goals necessitated the selective dismantling of the planned economy and the use of cities as the nexuses for integrating the PRC into global capitalist production. Reform was implemented in experimental stages that also increased the land area designated for urbanization projects. During the first five-year experiment (1979–1984), four SEZs were established, of which Shenzhen was the largest and most suc-
cessful. Shenzhen’s ideological and economic importance derived from this success, and, indeed, Deng Xiaoping’s first visit to the Shenzhen SEZ in 1984 both confirmed the validity of reform and opening and prefigured the opening of fourteen coastal cities and three delta regions (in Guangdong, Shanghai, and Tianjin).

The Chinese leaders’ decision to build cities to attract capital reflected the structure of global capitalism at the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s, just as their policies of self-reliance had arisen in response to the isolation imposed by the Western powers after the success of the revolution in 1949. The world capitalist system that the Deng leadership aspired to break into functioned as an integrated set of hierarchically ranked nation-states that were spatially articulated through a system of correspondingly ranked world cities. Within the first ten years of reform and opening, the PRC reproduced the geographic inequality necessary to stimulate capitalist growth. The primary means of creating this inequality was legislation, and, I argue, it continues to be so, but by the early 1990s, the increasing economic polarization between the reformed urban areas of the coast (including the SEZs) and the rest of (primarily rural) China was accepted as having its own economic dynamism independent of political legislation. This neoliberal understanding of the economy as being independent of political institutions is fundamental to representations of Shenzhen insofar as it suppresses the extent to which labor control through the legal-residence system has predicated both the Chinese competitive advantage in the market for foreign direct investment and access to domestic resources. Below, I briefly sketch the making and unmaking of the rural-urban division of labor in Shenzhen to contextualize the centrality of rural-urban relations within the debate over the value of reform.

During the period from liberation in 1949 until reform in 1979, the centrally planned economy of the PRC deliberately exploited agriculture to strengthen industry. Importantly, this distribution strategy had a spatial or geographical dimension, benefiting cities at the expense of the countryside. The effects of this policy were twofold: as it strengthened industry by using rural surpluses, economic emphasis was shifted from agriculture to industry. Importantly, “rural” and “urban” were not only descriptive terms but institutional categories that determined an area’s bureaucratic ranking and privi-
leges as well as an individual's freedom of movement. Under the household-registration (*hukou*) system, *hukou* status not only blocked mobility between country and city, it also determined an individual's access to material social benefits, all of which were available only to individuals with urban residence cards. In addition, an urban residence card entitled the bearer to work in one of the state-owned industries, which were operated by ministries and agencies of the state apparatus. In contrast, the only important benefit that accrued to rural status was the right, provided the household could afford it, to buy land to build a home. This exception has been crucial to the development of Shenzhen, but, for the moment, it is important to note that the transfer of surpluses from rural to urban areas involved their redistribution in the form of social benefits, a redistribution that was based on hierarchical administrative rankings within the state apparatus.\(^6\)

The reforms begun in 1979 attempted to redress the stark disparities between rural and urban life. In the country, changes included a decision to raise gradually the price of grain while simultaneously lowering the price of industrial products for farm use. At the same time, taxes imposed on rural brigades were reduced. In addition, farmers who had fulfilled their compulsory production quotas could now legally sell their surplus produce. In urban areas, reform aimed at enlivening commodity circulation and resolving unemployment problems. These goals were to be met by expanding enterprise autonomy from the state, stressing the role of the market mechanism, and implementing an employment policy that looked to private businesses as well as collective enterprises to absorb labor.\(^7\) But such changes were unaccompanied by any reform of the legal-residence system designed to control China's population. Without the abolition of the residence system (and by extension, the international immigration laws that prevented Chinese laborers from working legally in Hong Kong), the effect of these new policies was actually to further marginalize farmers—from both the urban economy and those forms of international capitalism that were introduced only in urban areas (and other countries).

From its founding in 1980, Shenzhen Municipality was heralded for the speed at which skyscrapers, highways, electric-power plants, and resort areas replaced rice fields. In short, the transformation of a rural border town into a modern city and the concomitant conferring of urban-residence
status upon former peasants could be read as a successful moment in the transcendance of rural-urban inequality, except for two groups of rural residents: those of Baoan County and those of the yet-to-be-opened rural areas of the interior. According to the laws that established the SEZs, Shenzhen was to be developed by the Shenzhen municipal government, a representative of the urban state apparatus, instead of being developed by the extant rural collectives. Practically, this meant that the central government and the government of Guangdong Province elevated the ranking of rural Baoan County to Shenzhen Municipality and then installed an urban apparatus to govern and develop the new administrative district. Former cadres of the Baoan County government were integrated into ministries and agencies within the new government; however, leadership positions were assigned to proreform cadres from Beijing and Guangzhou. These new leaders were invested with the authority to develop and approve projects in Shenzhen, thereby reproducing in the administrative structure the rural-urban hierarchy. Concomitantly, Baoan County communes dissolved into “villages.” The geographic borders of these new villages were based on brigade boundaries, which in turn had been based on the village boundaries that had been recognized during the collectivization movements of the 1950s.

The administrative structure inaugurated in Shenzhen was implicitly predicated on a continuation of the rural-urban division of labor that had enabled Mao-era growth; the urban state apparatus would industrialize Shenzhen, and the rural villages would produce food for the new city. The process of land expropriation was an extension of this logic. The city assumed responsibility for developing the urban infrastructure while urban units were assigned specific development projects. After approving a general plan, the municipal government assigned the necessary land to an urban unit, which paid the government a land-use fee. Subsequently, the unit approached the village to which the land belonged and negotiated a settlement. In a second method, the unit submitted a project proposal to the government for approval. Once the project was approved, the unit petitioned the Bureau of Urban Planning for a piece of land and then approached the relevant village. In neither case, however, were villages directly integrated into the development process. Nevertheless, the centralization of authority over land was not complete because as rural residents,
Baoan County villagers had the right to (1) compensation for their land, (2) a new house to replace the house that was expropriated, and (3) a new livelihood. These three rights determined village negotiation with urban units. Although villages were mandated to release their land-use rights to an urban unit, the conditions of that release were subject to negotiation. Claiming that manufacturing would be the new basis of collective livelihood, villages laid the foundation for village-level industrial zones; arguing for new houses, the male heads of households obtained land on which to build three- to six-story rental units, and basing compensation on population, all villagers were given a percentage of the compensation money.\textsuperscript{9} Effectively, the means of production in Shenzhen were shared by the municipal government and villages, each of which was differently integrated into the state apparatus. Statistics from the annual report on Shenzhen economic performance continue to reflect the founding political-economic division between urban (the Shenzhen state apparatus) and rural (the former Baoan County collectives) in the respective categories of “town and above” and “village and below.”

At the same time, the continuation of the legal-residence system during the construction of the SEZ underscored its importance to production in the PRC, especially to the management of rural surplus labor. That is, the success of Shenzhen villages lay in taking advantage of their rural status within an urban environment; it did not entail a transformation of the inequalities between rural and urban areas. The success of the formerly rural Pearl River delta must also be read as resulting from its promotion to urban status in a system still predicated on rural subordination. According to the 1990 census, the nation remained a primarily agrarian society despite massive restructuring. In 1990, only 26.2 percent of the population were legal urban residents, up from 20.55 percent in 1982. In Guangdong Province, the same years saw the urban population rise from 19.28 percent to 36 percent. The most dramatic changes were in the Pearl River delta, where urban residence rose from 12.8 percent to 43.89 percent as former counties such as Baoan were administratively redistricted as “urban.”\textsuperscript{10} Legal residence was the means of keeping this large population in place. As Mobo Gao documents, most farmers—and therefore most PRC citizens—were not only unable to participate in the money economy but also unable
to prosper by cultivating the required grain crops. Because grain remained consistently underpriced (despite the intentions of early reform leaders), after buying fertilizers and paying taxes, many farmers went into debt to feed themselves. The large number of migrant workers to Shenzhen (and Pearl River delta) factories and construction sites was drawn from this class.\textsuperscript{11}

In September 1995, when I first arrived in Shenzhen, the question of whether Shenzhen should maintain its “special” status was widely debated. Administratively, 1995 marked the end of this status, which gave Shenzhen the right to grant tax incentives to foreign and domestic investors as well as a relative degree of freedom from Beijing and Guangzhou to plan the course of urbanization. In practice, this was an example of the dismantling of the centrally planned economy. With respect to economic policy, Shenzhen was directed by the national government. But with respect to political policy, Shenzhen fell under the jurisdiction of, first, the Guangdong provincial government and, then, the central government in Beijing. With its economic plans submitted directly to Beijing, Shenzhen enjoyed a greater degree of independence from the provincial government than other similarly ranked cities. As Shenzhen leaders were well aware, this special status was both an economic resource and an institutional precondition for economic exceptionalism.

The fury of the Shenzhen debate, however, arose from the ideological stakes in larger debates over the meaning and direction of modernization in the PRC. Deng’s identification with the city meant that “Shenzhen” had become a code for reform. Could Shenzhen continue to be a model and an experimental center for economic reform despite the increasing disparity between coastal cities and interior rural areas? The double nature of Shenzhen’s rural population focused the attention on the contradictions endemic to reform. Proponents of reform pointed to the success of the new villages in modernizing, while opponents of reform countered with the claim that uncontrolled rural migration only served to increase urban problems without reducing the disparities between the cities and rural interior. In 1995, as the central government debated over whether to extend the SEZ’s special status for another fifteen years, the Shenzhen leadership strategized to maintain the status on which continued growth at the so-called Shenzhen
speed depended. A key ideological moment was the Shenzhen Special Economic Success Exhibition, at which the Shenzhen leadership articulated a justification for its special status, based on the creation of a new society. The exhibition represented the new society as well suited to the needs of the reform project insofar as Shenzhen, and by extension Shenzheners, geographically mediated the contradictions between global capitalism and the still backward, rural parts of China.

Pioneering New Subject Positions

My title is adapted from a phrase first used to describe the act of immigrating to Shenzhen. *Path breaking* was used to describe an individual’s efforts to conquer Shenzhen. I have translated *chuang* as “breaking a path into” rather than “charging in” or “storming in” in order to highlight how *chuang* was used and why it is so ideologically charged. In Shenzhen, *chuang* was a “breaking in” that reconfigured extant order. Thus, an individual who had “broken into Shenzhen” (*chuang Shenzhen*) made it possible for relatives to follow him into Shenzhen. That is, he “breaks open a path” for subsequent migrants. Likewise, Shenzhen was established to “break open a path into the world” (*chuang shijie*), making it possible for other Chinese cities to integrate into the world economy. In this sense, only pioneers “break open a path.” Claiming to “break open a path” rhetorically located the “path breaker” at the origin of subsequent change, legitimizing both patriarchy and Party hegemony through images of domestic and social order.

In practice, “breaking a path into Shenzhen” (*chuang Shenzhen*) referred to the accomplishment of the Shenzhen dream: legal residence, a good job, and a family. This phrase marked the (re)description of reform and opening in the north China vocabulary of common people who left families and birthplaces to improve their standing in the world. In this sense, *path breaking* indicated a nonparty understanding of the subject positions that had emerged during the Deng years, whereby individuals suddenly had opportunities to improve the material conditions of their families (rather than their social collectives). Simultaneously, in the official vocabulary, *path breaking* was used to describe the policies of reform and opening, as in the expression “breaking a path to the world” (*chuang shijie*). *Path breaking*
referred also, then, to the SEZ’s economic, political, and cultural standing (usually represented vis-à-vis that of metropolitan cities). Given this context of negotiation between the official state culture and local experience, Path Breaking is the name of a sculpture that dominates the plaza of the Shenzhen Museum. This statue had come to represent all the courageous path breakers—individual, collective, and official—who had helped to make the Shenzhen SEZ a symbol of reform China. Designed in 1993 for the All China Open Cities Reform and Opening Successes Exhibition, the sculpture reinterpreted the character chuang (a horse charging through a gate) as the creative spirit of China at the threshold of a new world. Eyes fixed on the road before him, legs powerfully braced, arms flexed in anticipation, and fingers gripping the iron frame of the door that for too long isolated China from the world, the central figure of the statue seemed about to pioneer a new China.

As will become apparent, the emphasis on individual accomplishment rather than collective effort was important to managing the class antagonisms between Shenzheners and outsiders; as in the American Dream, path breaking foregrounded individual successes as the criteria for evaluating municipal success. According to the cultural logic of chuang Shenzhen, the successful transformation of the self into a Shenzhener (much like the rags-to-riches myth of becoming American) manifests the individual qualities necessary for a new age. In other words, any Chinese citizen could break a path into Shenzhen, but not everyone could become a Shenzhener. At the same time, municipal success was coded within the rhetoric of nationalism, bringing the individual Shenzhener into the larger narrative of reform and opening. During his 1992 tour of south China, Deng Xiaoping provided three definitions of chuang: (1) to open the nation’s door to the world outside; (2) to break the shackles of the traditional system, aggressively reforming and creating a new system; and (3) to break out of the cage of leftist thought and walk the road of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” Consequently, the process of self-reinvention that defined chuang Shenzhen also signified—despite any individual recognition of conflicts between personal and state interests—commitment to the project of reform and opening.

This tendency to deploy the municipal subject—the Shenzhener—to
suture individual action and national success was explicitly rendered in the second statue that occupied the museum plaza, *City Emblem*. *City Emblem* accompanied the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition that was on display in the museum from October 1995 through December 1997. Also known as *The City of the Roc* (*Pengcheng*), this statue depicted an iron bird, its majestic wings extended for a flight of ten thousand miles, symbolizing Shenzhen. Beneath the giant bird, variously positioned on bamboo scaffolding, were smaller versions of the path breaking spirit: individual construction workers represented as building the platform from which the roc would soar. The placing of the two statues in the plaza of the Shenzhen Museum indicated the ideological importance of *Path Breaking* and *City Emblem* in the official Shenzhen cultural identity. The museum is the political and cultural center of the SEZ: the lot to its west is occupied by the municipal government building, and the main museum entrance fronts Shenzhen Road Central, the primary artery connecting the three districts of the SEZ. United by location, by their common designer, Zheng Jianping, and by their part in an exhibition celebrating the successes of reform and opening, *Path Breaking* and *City Emblem* were created explicitly to represent official Shenzhen within the larger context of national reform and opening. In addition to referencing Deng’s definition of path breaking, Zheng told me, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition celebrated the speed of urbanization in the “City of the Roc” and thus the contribution of all Shenzheners to the construction of both Shenzhen and China.¹⁵

Representation is, first, a second presentation, as in art or philosophy. But it also refers to the political act of speaking for another. Gayatri Spivak maintains that a theory of representation predicates an understanding of the relationship between global capitalism (exploitation in economics) and nation-state alliances (domination in geopolitics): “Such theories... must note how the staging of the world in representation—its scene of writing...—dissimulates the choice of and need for ‘heroes,’ paternal proxies, agents of power.”¹⁶ An important premise that subtends Spivak’s analysis, however, is the relative independence of the ideological apparatuses that dissimulate “the choice of and need for ‘heroes,’ paternal proxies, and agents of power” from the explicitly political apparatuses of the state and the law. Art and
philosophy are not everywhere and always independent of the state and law
to the same degree. Rather, the relationship between the ideological and the
political in particular spaces within specific countries demands analysis.

This is especially true for the PRC, where the institutionalization of the
ideological apparatus within the state has meant a high level of identifi-
cation between those heroes dissimulated through cultural means and sub-
ject positions of power. At the same time, because the state apparatus did
not recognize any social organization outside itself, how an individual was
integrated into this apparatus determined the material conditions of life.
Such is the case with the legal-residence system, which linked state owner-
ship of the means of production to individual livelihood. Individuals partici-
pated in the official bureaucracy through official positions within either a
rural collective or an urban work unit, which determined their access to
social goods. Further administrative distinctions were made between cadre
and farmer or cadre and worker. While those without any official subject
position were denied access to anything belonging to the state (including
food, housing, and education), those with high rank within this system con-
trolled the resources allotted to local bureaus—including land, factories,
and, decisively, the power to grant official subjecthood in the form of resi-
dence and work permits. Consequently, in this society, struggles over both
material goods and ideological representations most often took the form of
bureaucratic infighting, whether within a given bureau or, at a higher level,
between bureaus, implicating all subject positions within the state appar-
atus. As Ann Anagnost notes in her study of the production of subject posi-
tions, “I had to accept the possibility that it is impossible to elude the state,
because its presence is not just in a formal structure of governance, with all
of its gatekeeping functions, but within the speaking subject herself. . . .
The state is always present, and one must seek its traces even in places that
define themselves as ‘outside.’”\footnote{17}

Here lies the importance of the representations of subject positions within
the staged ideology of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes
Exhibition, as well as the value of evaluating these ideological fabrications
in light of the intersections of Chinese institutional practice and global capi-
talism. During the years represented by the exhibition (1980–1995), recog-
nition by the municipal bureaucracy in the form of a residence card or a temporary work permit was the defining precondition for breaking a path into Shenzhen. Further, the most economically successful immigrants were high-ranking cadres and their associates. For rural residents, breaking a path into Shenzhen meant obtaining a Shenzhen residence card, without which an individual was vulnerable to abrupt, arbitrary expulsion from the SEZ. Thus, insofar as the exhibition (re)presented the municipal government’s valuation of specific subject positions, it not only delineated the institutionally supported hierarchy of Shenzhen society, it also, in contradictory ways, presupposed the class of people most vulnerable to exploitation: rural migrant workers.

In the following analysis of how the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition portrayed chuang Shenzhen and chuang shijie, I argue that the subject positions displayed were ideological constructs that were contradicted by the relative institutional statuses of Shenzheners and outsiders and that they were calculated to facilitate the expansion of global capitalism in the PRC. Importantly, as indicated by both Path Breaking and City Emblem, the subject position Shenzhener was gendered. Throughout the exhibition, the identification of the prototypical Shenzhener and the state (the agents created through the coconstitutive processes of chuang Shenzhen and chuang shijie) with male figures was further elaborated, thereby effectively gendering the nationalism being promoted. I use the term gendered nationalism to assert the necessary dependence of chuang ideology on the gendered division of labor that subsumes the state-mediated expansion of global capitalism in Shenzhen.

The gendered nationalism staged by the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition was intended to manage the economic and political contradictions that had emerged during the first fifteen years of reform and opening. On the one hand, gender was used to diffuse local dissatisfaction with the reform process in Shenzhen, which was evident in claims that rural young men who could not find suitable employment in Shenzhen turned to crime, and rural young women disappointed by factory job prospects turned to prostitution. In response, a patriarchal representation of citizenship asserted that male citizens were constructing Shenzhen/modern China for their wives and children; thus, the well-ordered family was placed
at the center of the well-ordered society. On the other hand, Shenzhen municipal ideology simultaneously stressed nationalism as a response to public and political criticism of the SEZ. In this formula, the Shenzhen SEZ’s economic success in the global economy was presented as evidence of China’s success in international politics. These gendered representations glossed institutionalized class inequality between Shenzheners and rural residents as the natural division of labor in the well-ordered family. Shenzheners (and urban residents specifically) received such benefits of reform in the SEZ as higher wages, subsidized education for their children, and medical care. Outsiders—laborers without legal residence—worked in the construction sites and factories of Shenzhen without such security, without even the standard job-site protections due to workers. In the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition, the juxtaposition of images of path breaking and city building (remember City Emblem?) naturalized both the gendered politics of the PRC and the gendered economics of global capitalism; Shenzheners were represented as urban planners, engineers, construction company managers, and construction workers, conflating citizenship with the masculinized labor market and eliding the process of becoming a Shenzhener.

**Subjects of Early Reform: The Deng Years**

The physical layout of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition presented two distinct parts. The first represented the history of the SEZ, and the second projected an international, technological future for Shenzhen. These two sections were further differentiated by images of Deng Xiaoping and his successor, Jiang Zemin, invoking two different periods of Shenzhen capitalism. An exhibit featuring Deng Xiaoping initiated the history section, which was composed of five other exhibits emphasizing the foundation built during the first fifteen years of the SEZ’s existence. The subjects of these five “historical” exhibits were, in order, Shenzheners, the civilizing effects of material and spiritual socialism, questions and answers about economic success in the SEZ, Longgang District, and Baoan District. The next series began with an image of Jiang Zemin and celebrated the future that would be built on the historical foundation.
laid by Deng Xiaoping. As in the historical grouping, the “future” grouping consisted of five exhibits: Futian District, Nanshan District, the high-tech products produced in the SEZ (occupying two rooms), the international leaders who had visited Shenzhen, and a music video of images of Shenzhen set to the song “Soaring” (“Tengfei”).

Besides linking the historic and future development of Shenzhen with the CCP leadership, the display of the images of Deng and Jiang promoted two different forms of benevolent, moral leadership through which the governed became Shenzhener. On the one hand, domestic politics was represented in terms of construction and development; on the other hand, international politics was represented as the paternal management of international cities. Shenzhen “history” began with an image of Deng Xiaoping planting a tree at the Xianhu botanical garden as part of the 1992 southern tour. Captioned “China’s opening and reform master planner, Comrade Deng Xiaoping,” the picture credits Deng, and by implication the Shenzhen leadership, with implementing the design plan. In this formulation, being/becoming a Shenzhener is equated with participation in a construction site. In contrast, Shenzhen’s “future” was initiated with an image of Jiang Zemin at Shatoujiao, on the SEZ’s border with Hong Kong. More specifically, a picture of Jiang was placed above a model of China-England Street—one of the “experiments” being conducted in the SEZ, China-England Street being the site of the “one street, two systems” (yijie liangzhi) administration (a direct reference to the PRC–Hong Kong policy of “one country, two systems”). The return of Hong Kong to PRC sovereignty in 1997 was thus used both to indicate the future of the SEZ and to highlight Jiang’s responsibilities as the nation’s leader. This ideological representation, then, defined politics as the paternal management of globally ranked cities.

The domestic and international politics that prefigured the Shenzhen experiment were the Communist victory in the Chinese civil war and the cold war waged in Asia. The transformation of Shenzhen was achieved both rhetorically and through the labor of the military recruits who built Shenzhen’s infrastructure. In the history grouping, next to the image of Deng Xiaoping, hung a plaque quoting the deceased leader: “We can plan a place, call it a special zone. Shan’ganning was a special zone. The central
government has no money; you will have to look for it yourselves. Cut open a road of blood.” During the war against Japan and the subsequent civil war, Shan’ganning was under Communist control and thus identified by the Nationalists as a “special zone.” It was also the site of the Chinese Communist Party’s initial experiments with government, as the party cooperated with local peasants to survive. Indeed, the CCP’s historic identification with the interests of rural China was forged in sites such as Shan’ganning where peasants and Communist soldiers experimented in new forms of social organization. In this geographic model, Communist-led change began in a special zone and spread to all of China through the creative efforts of specific individuals. Deng Xiaoping not only characterized reform and opening as a continuation of Mao’s revolution but by invoking this model, made construction workers the agents of reform.

The second history exhibit made explicit the Deng-led shift from military to construction metaphors of society. The mural Shenzhener hung on a wall above six pictures of those heroes who had “cut open a road of blood,” sacrificing their lives in the construction of Shenzhen. Central to these images were pictures of the basic construction troops (jiben jianshe gongcheng bin) who had been sent to Shenzhen in 1980 to build the municipal infrastructure. The motif of images of foundation laying in support of social results was repeated throughout the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition. The dynamic interaction of founding images and social results, which enabled the shift from martial to construction rhetoric, in effect also opened new heroic subject positions—those of the valiant engineer and noble construction workers. The first four pictures documented engineers and planners who died during construction, one with a blueprint on his sickbed. The fifth and sixth pictures were group shots of the construction soldiers and workers who had come to the SEZ from all over China. Reform and opening had been entrusted to generals and privates turned urban planners and construction workers.20

Unlike later migrants who would earn wages that were based on market competition, these early workers had been assigned to Shenzhen under the planned economy and, similarly, therefore earned what the state decided to pay them. The land for these early developments was expropriated from rural collectives under the state system, with compensation based on
planned land use rather than on a competitive market price, that is, on an urban plan for attracting capital. In both instances, the state set the terms for breaking a path into Shenzhen with an eye toward national competitiveness in the world economy. This is particularly apparent when the positions of “rural” Shenzheners (those living in the new villages) and rural migrants are compared. Despite their initial exclusion from the process, Shenzhen villagers were eventually able to take advantage of their structural position within the state apparatus to make claims for land and compensation. Rural labor did not have such a recourse.

Development began in Luohu and spread west toward Nanshan, a geographic trajectory that demonstrates the extent to which Hong Kong served as the primary source of foreign capital in the SEZ. The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition mapped the five districts of the Shenzhen municipality—Longgang, Baoan, Luohu, Futian, and Nanshan—according to their location with respect to Hong Kong. This geography implied the economic and (less visibly) the political functions of the SEZ insofar as Shenzhen both connected and separated the Chinese mainland from Hong Kong and the rest of the world. With Hong Kong, Shenzhen shared a 27.5-kilometer border, which was internationally recognized as the limit of Chinese sovereignty. An 84.5-kilometer border, commonly called the “second line” (erxian), separated the SEZ from the rest of China. Shenzheners referred to the rest of China as “the interior” (neidi), a rhetorical gesture that positioned the SEZ between China and the outside world (guowai). The second line severed Shenzhen into two sections: the SEZ, encompassing Luohu, Futian, and Nanshan (Shenzhen’s “future”), and the suburbs of Longgang and Baoan (the SEZ’s “history”). The second line played an important role in managing the flow of Chinese citizens in and out of Shenzhen, while the flow of foreigners was regulated at the Luohu–Hong Kong border. All visitors to the SEZ from the interior were required to obtain a pass from the Security Bureau before crossing the second boundary. Just as Chinese citizens needed a visa to enter Hong Kong, they needed a “visa” to enter the SEZ.

By the time of the exhibition, the Shenzhen municipal government had evolved from a three-tiered administrative apparatus consisting of municipality, neighborhoods, and villages into a four-tiered administrative appa-
tatus with the added level of districts, each with its own government and standing party committee. According to the fifteen-year 1996 urban plan published by the municipal government, each district would have its specific functions, with investment, rent, and development projects to be determined according to this plan.\textsuperscript{22} Luohu was to be the commercial center; Futian, the political center; and Nanshan, the cultural center of Shenzhen. Longgang would house the industrial, and Baoan the agricultural, businesses of Shenzhen. In theory, the district governments were to the municipal government as Shenzhen represented itself as being to the central government—loyal construction workers carrying out a master plan.

The subject positions that emerged out of this restructuring were represented in the bas-relief \textit{Shenzheners}. This image organized the people of Shenzhen into four lines of citizens marching toward the future. The first line consisted of two men—a cadre and a planner—studying a blueprint together. In the second line were three construction workers. The third line was made up of an intellectual, a policeman, and a fireman—all males. The fourth line—more of a clump than a line—included a fisherman, a Hakka farm woman, a woman in high heels, a female pole-vaulter, an old man, a female temporary worker, an elementary school girl, and a male and female college student. In effect, citizens who had not been integrated into the first three lines marched in the fourth. When examining this image, it is worth recalling how the construction industry was coded as a transformation of the military under reform and opening. Given this metaphoric lineage, the image of the construction workers had two meanings. On the one hand, the men represented the working class traditionally represented by the party. On the other hand, they could have been read as construction soldiers or construction scouts. This amounted to an indirect reference to Shan'-ganning, which would have been recognized by “Old Shenzheners.”

This reading can be supported by tracing the transformations that placed construction workers—male temporary workers—in the second rank and factory workers—female temporary workers—in the fourth. In China, as in the West, the military continued to be one of the primary models of citizenship. During national holidays, an individual’s relation to the state was represented by his or her familial relationship to a PLA soldier, who in turn was portrayed as the filial son of the father-state. This imagery subtended
the link between Shan’ganning and Shenzhen that the construction soldiers embodied. In contrast, female temporary workers were portrayed as former rural people who had come to Shenzhen to improve themselves, make money, and see the world before marriage. Thus, Shenzhener underlined this martial understanding of nationalism by placing a Hakka farm woman and a female temporary worker together in the fourth rank. And yet a further tension subverts the unity of soldier-construction worker, just as it destabilizes the gender unity of high-heeled woman and temporary worker. This tension is the absence of legal residence.

I had been conducting fieldwork in Shenzhen for about three months when I met Xiao Li (a pseudonym). Xiao Li’s mother had been one of the barefoot doctors who brought medical care to rural Hunan; his father was a factory worker. The mother had sacrificed a comfortable retirement by coming to Shenzhen as a temporary worker to give Xiao Li a chance to better himself. Here, she worked as an apartment-building superintendent, cleaning and registering visitors. In this capacity, she had been given a room in the building, where her husband and son lived with her. Xiao Li was a part-time student at Shenzhen University. The family hoped that upon graduation, he would find a good job in Shenzhen and, through his unit, be able to change his Hunan rural household registration to a municipal household registration. This required a trip back to Hunan, since rural residents were required to first transfer their rural registration to the city that administered their village before they could apply for Shenzhen registration. (Only those men and women holding urban household registrations could transfer their registration directly to Shenzhen, and this number was based on the city’s development plan.23)

Xiao Li’s inability to obtain a legal residence also directly influenced his ability to marry and reproduce the well-ordered family that was characteristic of Shenzhener. In Shenzhen, Xiao Li emphasized, women would not consider marrying a man who lacked a job, housing, or Shenzhen registration. Importantly, each of these fundamental conditions for living in Shenzhen was gendered in ways that institutionalized women’s dependence on men. Besides the complementary feminization and masculinization of specific jobs, with men working in higher-paid and women in lower-paid occupations, with respect to housing and legal residence, women’s inferiority
was institutionalized in the form of "male-first" immigration and housing policies. Married women could apply for Shenzhen residence only after their husbands had been registered, and the requirements for housing were stricter for women than men.

These differences were most visible in the demographic profiles of the SEZs and coastal cities, where by and large, the marketing of labor and its resulting migration had been most pervasive. For example, areas with heavy industry (a male labor market) attracted more males than females, and areas with light industries (a female labor market) attracted more female migrants. Thus, the concentration of light industries and service industries in Beijing, Shanghai, and the Pearl River delta meant a correspondingly high concentration of female immigration into these areas. At the same time, however, unlike Beijing and Shanghai, the Pearl River delta had been primarily rural, except for Guangzhou. Hence, the cadres who were transferred to Shenzhen to begin the work constructing the SEZ came from already established cities. In the early 1980s, administrative cadres came primarily from Guangzhou and the cities that had administered Baoan County before reform; engineering cadres came from the technical universities (especially Qinghua and Tongji Universities). After Tian'anmen and the rise of Shenzhen as an economic power, urban residents began to arrive from other cities, especially Beijing.

As the first PRC city to experiment with a labor market and contract employment and with a population primarily created through immigration to specific labor markets, Shenzhen's rural-versus-urban differences had been constitutive of the emergent social structure. Importantly, the gender differences related to specific industries were expressed as an elaboration of the rural-urban breach. Because they were generally better educated than their rural counterparts, who were mainly manual laborers, more urban migrants to Shenzhen qualified for professional-level jobs. Furthermore, as noted above, under the residence policies, both male and unmarried female urban migrants could transfer their residence to Shenzhen. At the same time, the feminization of the lowest-paid factory jobs placed rural men and women in economic competition. In rural hometowns, this competition had been mediated by traditional divisions of labor; in non-SEZ urban areas it had been controlled by the state. A glance at some of the statistics from the
1995 Shenzhen City One Percent Population Survey (Shenzhen shi baifen zhi yi renkou chouyang diaocha) suggests the demographic contours of this new society. Significantly, even the method of collecting this data reinforced the primacy of legal residence in defining Shenzhen citizenship; only legal residents and legal temporary workers were counted.

The 1995 Shenzhen City One Percent Population Survey interviewed 25,434 people of an official population of approximately 2.54 million. At the time, census-takers estimated, the illegal population was estimated to be between 500,000 and 1 million. Of the people interviewed, 13,005 were men and 12,429 were women, although women actually outnumbered men in the SEZ. Except for the age bracket most closely identified with temporary labor—ages fifteen through twenty-four, where the women surveyed outnumbered the men surveyed by almost two to one (4,648 to 2,457)—the official, that is, legal, population was predominantly male. Employment statistics suggest the pattern of men occupying permanent jobs and women occupying temporary, marginalized, or unofficial jobs. Of 16,803 employed interviewees, again, city officials counted more men than women: 9,359 to 7,444. The distribution of employment confirmed the masculinization of permanent jobs: in government there were 556 men and 166 women; in management, 1,404 men and 659 women; and in business, 1,284 men and 857 women. Only in service jobs did the number of female employees exceed that of males, by 1,529 to 905. Moreover, of the 4,539 unemployed interviewees, 1,812 were housewives. The others were schoolchildren, the retired, or those looking for work. Clearly, this labor market corresponds to the bias of the “male-first” residence policy in Shenzhen. Many of the unemployed housewives were professional women, educated and trained in prereform urban units, who had followed their husbands to Shenzhen and been unable to find work. At the same time, unmarried rural women could migrate temporarily to the SEZ to work in the factories, but without legal residence, they might be forced to leave whenever it suited the municipal government.

To return to Shenzheners: I would suggest that the mural naturalized a social hierarchy based on the institutionalized division between rural and urban residence status by deploying gendered representations of a “natural”
inequality between men and women. That is, the ideologically motivated representation of urban women and rural people in the fourth rank was due to those groups' institutional absence from Shenzhen employment, housing, and legal-residence policies and benefits, despite their active contribution to Shenzhen life in the form of both paid labor and homemaking. The representations of subject positions in this mural managed social inequality with a call to a nationalized family that mediated institutional and economic inequality. 28 As evident in the representations of construction soldiers that opened the history section, the primary subject positions officially available in Shenzhen society were reinforced by a primarily male connection to the military. These exemplary men who embodied the revolutionary spirit that created modern China, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition asserted, built the SEZ for the modern and well-dressed woman. 29

The international community has confirmed its support for reform in Shenzhen and, by extension, the PRC. In the second room of the history section was an award from the United Nations Center for Human Settlements (Habitat). The Habitat Scroll of Honor was awarded to Shenzhen in 1992 "for its large-scale, high-speed construction of housing and public facilities to meet rapidly growing demand while maintaining adequate standards in the face of natural and socioeconomic constraints." Beneath plastic palm trees were photographs and models of various housing projects, which ranged from single-family villas modeled on American suburban houses to twenty-story apartment-building complexes modeled on Hong Kong housing projects. Also included were images of the improved residences characteristic of the "new" Shenzhen villages. In other words, this exhibit stressed the success of the SEZ in creating a family environment for both rural and urban residents, an environment that both justified the hegemony of the party-state and earned international approval. Thus, the institutional changes introduced in Shenzhen not only linked the PRC with the global capitalist economy but functioned to gain the acceptance of international capitalism. The ideological meeting ground of this staging of East meets West was the individual family home. Furthermore, the means of continuing the successful reproduction of the patriarchal capitalist citizen was displayed in the next exhibit, which showed cultural achievements in
education, the news media, science and technology research, athletics, and medicine.

The Deng Xiaoping section of the exhibition did important ideological work for the Shenzhen municipal government by legitimating the social inequality that resulted from early experiments in reform, inequity that was necessary for the SEZ’s continued growth. Central to this ideology was a shift from the collectivist rhetoric of socialism to the individualist rhetoric of path breaking, a shift represented in the transformation of Shan’ganning liberation soldiers into Shenzheners. Importantly, the centrality of soldier-construction worker in the representation coded citizenship as masculine: among the mural’s Shenzheners, no women marched in the first three ranks of society. Moreover, this gendering of citizenship effectively effaced another social division, one that was often more important than gender in the distribution of social goods: the division between the rural, lower-wage workers and those with legal Shenzhen household registration.

Taken together, these examples suggest a provisional definition of path breaking as a form of agency manifest in a newly created subject position, one from which it was possible to re-create the world. Hence, Deng Xiaoping and other leaders and entrepreneurs broke a path into Shenzhen, remaking both themselves and the world. In this sense, path breaking referred to the freedoms of institutional agency in global capitalism rather than to the freedoms of a generalized category of immigrants to the SEZ. As a popular expression in Shenzhen had it, “China is a paradise for cadres of the rank of chu or higher.” In most cases, path breaking meant the pursuit of the institutional prerequisites for social agency: a job, a house, and legal residence. In municipal ideology, People’s Liberation Army soldiers/construction scouts exemplified and set the horizon for these new subject positions as the state apparatus positioned itself to broker the relationship between the Chinese population and the global capitalist system.

**Future Subjects: The Jiang Years**

In the layout of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition, the Deng and Jiang eras were bridged by a display of interactive computers that allowed the visitor to ask questions about the Shenzhen economy. The
computers marked a shift from a rhetoric of military-construction subject positions to one of construction-consumption positions. Ideologically, the nationalism portrayed in this half of the exhibition coded the further transformation of the Chinese economy from a collectivist system based on production to a capitalist economy based on individual consumption, a gesture implicit in the representation of Shenzheners as identifiable individuals rather than as classes (as they had been represented in the Shenzheners mural). The “Chineseness” of these products was fundamental to the exhibition, although their value could ultimately be measured only in terms of the global economy. The GNP of Shenzhen was placed within the contexts of both Guangdong and the PRC, thus demonstrating Shenzhen’s worth to the nation. But the value of this contribution was further located in comparison with other economies—most prominently those of Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.30 Indeed, the hyperdeveloped pectoral muscles of the statue Path Breaking made sense in this context. As Susan Brownell observes, sports in the PRC assumed an important position in a nationalist ideology of international competition.31 Importantly, before reform, international competition referred to competition between capitalist and socialist forms of government. In the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition, however, it referred to the performance of Chinese capital within global capitalism; correspondingly, nationalism took the guise of the redistribution of profits. In this section on the “future” of Shenzhen, I examine the subject positions that this nationalist capitalism both opened and foreclosed upon in the institutional restructuring of the relations between the PRC and Hong Kong, as well as those between Shenzhen and specific rural counties.

The Shenzhen “future” on display stressed the institutional function of the SEZ within the state apparatus, namely, the linking of the rest of China to the world outside. In the first part of the exhibition, Shenzhen’s success had been represented as a result of Deng’s intervention, the product of political and economic experimentation. In contrast, the second part represented Shenzhen as a tool of the central government, as a means of simultaneously supplying the Chinese “interior” with desperately needed material goods and integrating Hong Kong (and, implicitly, global) capital into the political structure of the PRC. How did Shenzhen set the stage for breaking a path into the world?
“The Jiang future” was developed in a rhetorical structure parallel to that which constituted “the Deng past.” Specifically, the grouping of the exhibits elaborated the relationship between leaders and the governed that was established in the first exhibit of the respective groupings. The Shatoujiao exhibit introduced Jiang Zemin in an installation title: “The party secretary links the emotions of two places.” In this complex, two-part exhibit, Hong Kong symbolized “the economic,” and Shenzhen “the political.” The bottom half consisted of a model of Shatoujiao, a shopping street literally built on both sides of the Sino-British border; the top half narrated the success of a civic project sponsored by Shenzhen leaders—building a school in a rural area. Both halves of the exhibit suppressed reference to the institutional forces structuring the production of Shatoujiao and its corresponding subject positions. The model gave no indication that a special pass was required to enter Shatoujiao, as PRC citizens could not legally enter Hong Kong. Likewise, rural students from the Chinese interior could not attend school in Shenzhen regardless of extant conditions in neidi villages. Instead, the ethical dynamic linking the two halves was the implied circulation of capital: profits earned in the shopping street could be used to build schools in the interior through the institutional mediation of Shenzhen. In the Shatoujiao exhibit, the institutional contradiction that allowed the free movement of Hong Kong residents into Shenzhen and denied PRC residents free access into Hong Kong was represented as a trip to an international shopping mall. In this model, Hong Kong was represented as a global shopping space; Deng-era, Shenzhen-produced products were reframed as the products of an “international city.” In the model, small billboards showing international luxury name brands fronted high-rises, and small plastic business suits and high heels (click click) moved from shop to shop. This ideology of “economics as (international) society” was staged in a model future that erased both the relative disadvantages of PRC citizens and the complex political negotiations surrounding Sino–Hong Kong relations, even as the displacement of “the world” by “Hong Kong” further sinicized the global market. While the bottom half of the exhibit used the consumption of name-brand goods to represent the complex PRC-SEZ-Hong Kong relationship, the top half displayed Jiang Zemin redistributing Shenzhen pro-
fits. In short, the Shatoujiao exhibit ideologically managed two contradictions that were institutionally managed by the administration of the SEZ: first, the contradiction between Hong Kong capital and PRC labor (here represented as consumption), and second, the contradiction between the respective governments of the PRC and Hong Kong.

The top half of the exhibit also resolved an analogous contradiction between Shenzhen and the interior: the increasing economic polarization between open, coastal cities and the rural interior. This portion of the exhibit displayed a series of photographs that showed Jiang listening to the tragic story of a rural girl who, owing to financial difficulties, had been forced to leave elementary school. A television broadcast of this story inspired a local Lei Feng to organize a tour of Shenzhen leaders to view conditions in the girl’s hometown. (Lei Feng, of course, was the famous character from the Cultural Revolution who sacrificed himself for the party and the people; his reincarnation in Shenzhen spoke to the persistent need for the state to define the terms of citizenship and governance with respect to the rural majority.) After seeing the backwardness of the interior firsthand, the leaders organized to send money and school supplies to the country. Thus, Jiang Zemin’s leadership was figured as the concern that stimulated others to redress rural-urban inequality. By documenting that SEZ leaders had vigorously promoted this so-called Project Hope, the exhibit once again returned to the revolutionary heartland to legitimate the current regime. Project Hope specifically targeted rural Jingganshan and Yan’an for charity. Deng Xiaoping’s reappropriation of the military revolution through a redefinition of the meaning of Shan’ganning became, in the Shatoujiao exhibit, the reappropriation of preliberation communist experimentation in rural reform Jingganshan and Yan’an. It was in Jingganshan that Mao’s theory of a peasant revolution was first tested, and Yan’an was the center of CCP resistance from 1936 to 1946. The exhibit suggested that reform in general and the government of Shenzhen specifically would rescue these centrally historic PRC sites. In Maoist ideology, Jingganshan and Yan’an peasants had had a revolutionary consciousness. But, tellingly, the Shatoujiao exhibit offered no space for rural solidarity; the only subject position open to rural residents was that of dependent female student. In
Shenzhen, the rural poverty that had incited revolution could be read only negatively, as pitiable deprivation or, more alarmingly, the source of uncontrolled illegal immigration.33

Taken together, the two halves of the Shatoujiao exhibit also reworked the historic ties between Baoan County and Hong Kong; it was, after all, the Shenzhen River that marked the border between the Qing dynasty and the British Empire after England grabbed the New Territories in 1898.34 Indeed, the Shatoujiao exhibit effected a second displacement—that of Hong Kong by Shenzhen, a gesture that negated 156 years of colonial occupation. The conflation of “Hong Kong” with “the world” (through name-brand commodities) did more than sinicize capital; identifying “Hong Kong” with Shatoujiao reproduced “Hong Kong” as a Shenzhen shopping mall. Note also that the image of Jiang redistributing material wealth from Hong Kong to the interior by way of Shenzhen in effect reversed the export orientation of the SEZ economy. Instead of manufacturing products in Hong Kong factories, Shenzheners here become consumers of those products. That is to say, the Shatoujiao exhibit legitimated the capitalistic labor relations that characterized Hong Kong–Shenzhen relations by casting Shenzheners in the role of Hong Kong residents. The nationalistic capitalism of the exhibit promoted this reworking of colonial, Maoist, and early reform history in a narrative that announced the emergence of Shenzhen—rather than Hong Kong—as an international city.35 Importantly, although the “one country–two system” policy negotiated by Deng and Margaret Thatcher restated questions of political and social difference within a rhetoric of cultural and economic identity, except with regard to accepting investment, it did not give Shenzhen political privileges vis-à-vis Hong Kong.36

Nevertheless, stories about the origin of the SEZ emphasized that there was a time before reform and before Shenzhen made its debut on international business maps. These narratives stressed the cultural and economic ties between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. In these prereform stories, young, able-bodied men went south into Hong Kong to earn cash; women, the elderly, and children remained behind in subsistence farming and a barter economy. Later, this image of Shenzhen as economically backward and decrepit when compared to Hong Kong retrospectively grounded narra-
tives about Shenzhen's success in a larger narrative of necessary urbanization, even as it implicitly justified Hong Kong's colonial status in terms of access to money. Yet any redistribution of wealth to rural areas took place not so much through the largesse of national or SEZ leaders but through the remittances of individual laborers to their families. These workers often sent up to half of their annual salaries home, supplementing family incomes and paying farm debts. Yet their rural registration meant that they were still legally obliged to produce a quota of grain, despite living and working in the SEZ. Thus, the agricultural policy of the same apparatus that subsidized capitalist urbanization in effect forced rural residents to enter open cities such as Shenzhen as "free labor"—the precondition for capitalist relations. But as we have seen, in the capitalist nationalism of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Successes Exhibition, these workers were absent from the mural Shenzhener; they appeared only as children in need of party guidance.

"The Jiang future" portrayed Shenzhen as an instrument that linked the state apparatus and the global economy. This process was staged through a double displacement: of Hong Kong by the global market and of Hong Kong by Shenzhen. Through this double displacement, the institutional structure of this linkage—that is, the export-oriented factory system and the grain quota—requiring rural residence system—was suppressed. The Jiang future portrayed path breaking as the subject position of the world shopper when the majority of Shenzhen workers did not even have the legal right to be in the SEZ (let alone Hong Kong or beyond) and when their salaries were clearly insufficient to buy imported goods. At the same time, the Jiang future looked toward a sinicization of both capital and goods within the context of the state apparatus. This representation implied both Chinese ascendancy within the world market and the establishment of China as a regional power. Finally, in this shift of emphasis and compared to the subject positions opened in "the Deng past," "breaking a path into the world" in Shenzhen municipal ideology meant that the subjects of path breaking were no longer primarily individual representatives of the state (in the form of construction soldiers) but rather the state itself (in the form of the party secretary).
Conclusion

The rural-urban hierarchy that produced China's industrial base under Mao made possible expendable, cheap urban labor during reform and opening. Under Mao, urban workers had been guaranteed social benefits that for the employing unit entailed specific material obligations. Moreover, immigration between rural and urban areas was strictly controlled to build an industrial base. Under Deng, however, reform enabled the capitalization of these urban industries without the social net that had characterized Maoist policies. At the same time, controls on movement were lifted without changing the legal-residence system, so that rural residents were “free” to leave their villages but not their institutional obligations. The capitalization of urban industry resulted in the widening of the material gap between rural and urban people. This was the domestic background informing the kind of ideology and subject positions advocated by the Shenzhen leadership.

In Shenzhen municipal ideology, path breaking signified the unfettered freedom to stake out a subject position free of the economic constraints that had characterized Maoist China; its forms were the individual freedom of reform China and the increasing international agency of the PRC. These two subject positions were identified within the Deng past and Jiang future—as prosperous family life and nationalist capitalism, respectively. At the level of the individual, the role of government was to provide the means of securing a private home; at the level of the state, the role of government was to represent an independent PRC in world affairs, where world affairs was understood as the redistribution of name-brand commodities. Moreover, individual Shenzheners could also participate in world affairs, either through “Project Hope” or shopping in Shatoujiao. Both of these goals, the exhibits asserted, could be accomplished through the construction of Shenzhen. The construction of Shenzhen provided jobs for individuals and linked the PRC to the world. This rhetoric should alert us to the extent to which, by the autumn of 1995, political and social legitimacy in Shenzhen was implicated in global capitalism.

An analysis of the institutional structure of specific aspects of Shenzhen reveals the extent to which this ideology mystified structural inequality both at the level of the individual (with respect to jobs, housing, and the other
social benefits that depended on legal residence) and at the level of international relations (with respect to freedom of movement). Taken together, these two levels of inequality produced the complex class relations that were constitutive of Shenzhen. In this institutional setting, an individual’s class position derived from his or her position within the legal-residence system, which, as a function of rural versus urban origins, was further informed by the institutionalization of gender roles through “male-first” policies. This analysis suggests that an understanding of the social formations brought about by reform in Shenzhen—and in the People’s Republic of China more generally—will require close scrutiny of the specific intersections of class and gender with institutional and economic practice. It also suggests that studies of postreform Chinese nationalism can only take place within the broader context of the international division of labor.

Notes

I would like to thank Yang Qian for thinking through these issues with me, as well as the two anonymous reviewers for positions, who provided especially helpful comments. To Nancy Kool I owe particular thanks for her elegant editing of an earlier version of this essay. This essay is based on fieldwork funded by the National Science Foundation Program in Ethics and Values and conducted from September 1995 through December 1996. It was first presented at the Third International Conference on Cultural Criticism at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in January 1997. I have presented my findings in the past tense to call attention to their contingency.

1 What’s in a name? “Shenzhen” sutures a number of administrative changes that took place from 1978 through 1990, marking changing social formations. Guangdong Province elevated Baoan County to Shenzhen City in January 1979, but the central government approved the Baoan Export Zone (chukou tequ) on 14 February, only approving the elevation of Baoan County to Shenzhen City on 22 March 1979. On 26 August 1980 the central government elevated Shenzhen City to the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. However, it was soon decided that the SEZ was too large to develop properly and on 15 October 1981 the central government redrew the boundaries of the SEZ, reinstating Baoan County. The new SEZ included two market towns (Shenzhen and Shatoujiao) and five communes (Fucheng, Futian, Nantou, Shekou, and Yantian), which occupied only 327.5 square kilometers of the county’s original 2,020 square kilometers. In July 1983 the new Baoan County Government was installed. By the late 1980s Baoan County, which had developed more or less independently of the SEZ, was an economic player in its own right. In January 1990 Baoan County
was eliminated and the area divided into two city districts—Baoan and Longang—that were under the administration of Shenzhen City. As of 1999 Shenzhen City consisted of two parts: the SEZ and the districts of Baoan and Longang. In the 1980s to speak of “Shenzhen” was to speak of the SEZ, while during the 1990s “Shenzhen” included the Baoan and Longang districts. See the 1985 Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Yearbook (Shenzhen jingji tequ nianjian) and the 1986 General Plan of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (Shenzhen jingji tequ zongti guihua) for examples of how New Baoan County was excluded from “Shenzhen.”

2 I do not know of an official translation for the term Shenzhen ren and have adapted “Shenzhener” from the title of a popular magazine.

3 Aijaz Ahmad, In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures (London: Verso, 1992), 316. My understanding of the capitalist use of nationalism is indebted to this work.


6 The scale of this transfer, when placed within the context of the predominantly rural population of the PRC, suggests the extent to which industrialization has marginalized agriculture in the national economy. In 1949, agriculture accounted for 70 percent of the national GNP, with industry accounting for 30 percent. By the time of reform in 1978, those figures had been reversed, with agriculture accounting for 24.8 percent of the total, and industry 75.2 percent—even though the population distribution had not changed significantly. See Yu Zhangyong and Yuan Jianqi, Nongcun yu chengshi gonghuida [Rural areas and urban industrialization] (Guizhou: Guizhou Renmin Chubanshe, 1994).

7 See Xianmin Shi, “Cultural Differentiation and the Double Dual Social Structure in the Transformation of Chinese Society,” in Hong Kong Social Science Service Center, Chinese Social Sciences Yearbook (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Social Science Service Center, 1994).

8 In 1987, Shenzhen attempted to control this process by instituting a system of auctions, bidding, and contracts to assign areas for development.

9 Often, village leaders invested this compensation money in the new industrial zone, issuing stock options to villagers instead of cash.

10 Guangdong Sheng Bianweihui, Kua shiji de Zhongguo renkou: Guangdong Sheng juan [Chinese population at the millenium] (Guangzhou: Guangdong Sheng Renmin Chubanshe, 1994).

11 Mobo Gao, “Migrant Workers from Rural China: Their Conditions and Some Implications for Development in Southern China,” in Entrepreneurship, Economic Growth, and Social

12 Chuang is most often used to refer to the experience of northerners coming south. In a cleavage central to this paper, in Shenzhen, the category “outsider” (waidi ren) signified difference from locals (bendi ren). However, waidi ren was context specific, and people from Guangdong (but not Shenzhen) often used it to describe people who were not Guangdong people.

13 The phrase Shenzhen dream (Shenzhen meng) was often used with reference to the American dream in a popular discussion about the similarities and differences between Euramerican immigration to the western United States and northern Chinese immigration to Shenzhen.

14 Wang Yezi, “Yi zuo diaosu de dansheng” [Birth of a sculpture], Shenzhen Shanghao [Shenzhen economic daily], 11 July 1994, special ed.

15 Zheng Jianping, interviewed by author, Shenzhen, 8 July 1996.

16 Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: MacMillan, 1988), 279. Spivak writes that “a theory of representation points, on the one hand, to the domain of ideology, meaning, and subjectivity, and, on the other hand, to the domain of politics, the state, and the law” (271).


18 During the preparation for the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, for example, illegal residents were removed from the SEZ and small food stands and night markets were closed down.

19 At the time of the Successes Exhibition, Jiang Zemin had already been appointed as Deng’s successor.

20 When the exhibition closed, the scaffolding holding up the roc, as well as the construction workers, was removed from the plaza. City Emblem was then fixed on a ground-level platform below that of Path Breaking.

21 A sixth district, Yantian, was added on 1 January 1998.

22 When the plan was shown, also at the museum, men in business suits were present taking notes on the proposed developments.

23 It could also be difficult for urban residents from cities that had not been opened to transfer their residence to Shenzhen because the central government wanted to prevent the flight of intellectuals and technical workers from the interior.


25 These statistics were the basis for urban planning in Shenzhen, which in turn influenced the number of legal residences that would be granted each year. In 1996, representatives from
the different municipal bureaus used the figures to write policy recommendations on issues ranging from birth control to school construction.

26 The Shenzhen City One-Percent Survey was conducted as part of a province-wide demographic survey. The national census takes place every ten years at the beginning of a decade, while the One-Percent was introduced to measure changes from census to census. The first One-Percent was conducted in 1995, the next will take place in 2005. A special division of the Census Bureau oversees, conducts, and interprets the One-Percent. Significantly, at both the provincial and municipal levels, One-Percent statistics were based on legal and temporary residences. Estimates for residents outside the hukou system were based on information from a variety of sources, including the number of visitor permits issued at the second line, the number of passengers coming into Shenzhen by train, and the experience of census-takers who reported visiting buildings where no one had a legal permit to be in Shenzhen.

27 In the summer of 1998, the Shenzhen municipal government organized a special committee to remove beggars, flower girls, car cleaners, garbage collectors, and female escorts—all people associated with the illegal population. The justification for organizing the removal of illegals was that 95.7 percent of convicted criminals in the city did not have legal registration. See Jia Yingdong, “Wo shi jiang jizhong, qingli ‘sanwu’ renyuan” [Our city will concentrate on settling ‘three withouts’ individuals], Shenzhen ribao [Shenzhen daily], 19 September 1998, 1.

28 The gender of power in Shenzhen was even more explicitly rendered in a pun that circulated during 1996: Ju-level (bureau-level) cadres play the hole (golf/vagina), chu-level (division-level) cadres play the ball (bowling/breast), ke-level (departmental-level) cadres play themselves (mah-jongg/masturbate).

29 As one of the first engineers to come to Shenzhen said in response to a question about the early conditions in the SEZ, “That year [1980] Shenzhen wasn’t the kind of modern special zone where high-heel shoes click-click on cement streets.” Zhang Zhiguang, Zhonghua fengliu: Tequ chuangyezhe jishi [Distinguished China: Records of special zone creators] (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 1996), 8.

30 The fourth “little tiger,” South Korea, was notably absent from this world of Chinese products, Chinese capital, and Chinese society.


32 In Shenzhen, urban intellectuals spoke despairingly of rural collectivism—even in Shenzhen new villages—as a feudal holdover.

33 Pictures of the masses of rural migrants at the Shenzhen train station were often published along with newspaper editorials encouraging farmers to stay in the rural areas.

34 Shenzhen Market became a border town in 1898, when the British acquired the land south of the Shenzhen River—the so-called Hong Kong New Territories. Shenzhen Market became increasingly important with the completion of the Kowloon-Canton Railroad in
In 1953 the new Chinese government moved the Baoan County seat from Nantou City (which for almost one thousand years had defended maritime passage to Guangzhou) to Shenzhen Market.

35 Arif Dirlik has discussed the emergence of Asian capitalism as both a research topic and new "common sense." See Arif Dirlik, "Critical Reflections on 'Chinese Capitalism' as a Paradigm," *Identities* 3, no. 3 (January 1997): 303–330. Yun Wing Sung, a Hong Kong economics scholar, is not alone in arguing that "Hong Kong and Taiwanese businessmen . . . already have a tremendous advantage in the Mainland market," and if they "cannot compete against foreigners . . . they deserve to lose in [this] competition." See Yun Wing Sung, *Non-institutional Economic Integration via Cultural Affinity: The Case of Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1992), 40.

36 In 1997, for example, the Hong Kong provisional legislature met in Shenzhen under the orders of the central government and not the Shenzhen government.

37 The expression "store in front, factory in back" more accurately described the economic interdependence of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. A 1992 report put 89 percent of total Hong Kong investment in China in Guangdong, with 31 percent in Shenzhen. In contrast, municipal literature highlighted large U.S. or European multinational investors in the SEZ, downplaying the scope of Hong Kong and Taiwanese investment. See Hu Shenghai, Li Guicai, Wang Fuhai, and Zheng Dawei, "Shenzhen shicheng guihua yu jingji fazhan" [Shenzhen urban planning and economic development], *Chengshi guihua* [Urban planning] (January 1994): 35–39.